

PIEDMONT, WILLOW CREEK, BEEPON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

MONTANA

REFUGEE PERSONNEL

John E. Schwartz, Supt. of Refuges, Bozese, Montana

Grover F. Egan, Refuge Manager, Charlo, Montana

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Charlo, Montana

PINNACLES, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES
Narrative Report
January 1 - April 30, 1952

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL

Weather Conditions	-----	1
Water Conditions	-----	1

WILDLIFE

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Populations and Behavior	-----	2
Food and Cover	-----	2

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

Populations and Behavior	-----	2
Food and Cover	-----	3

BIG GAME ANIMALS

FUR ANIMALS, PREDATORS, AND RODENTS	-----	3
-------------------------------------	-------	---

PREDATORIC BIRDS INCLUDING CROWS, RAVENS, AND HAWKS	-----	3
---	-------	---

FISH	-----	3
------	-------	---

<u>REFUGE DEVELOPMENT MAINTENANCE</u>	-----	3
---------------------------------------	-------	---

ECONOMIC USE OF THE REFUGE

FARMING PERMITS	-----	3
-----------------	-------	---

GRADING PERMITS	-----	4
-----------------	-------	---

SIGNATURE	-----	4
-----------	-------	---

FISHKUN, WILLOW CREEK, BENTON LAKE
 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES
 NARRATIVE REPORT
 January 1, - April 30, 1932

I. GENERAL

A. Weather Conditions:

The following table gives the general weather conditions for all three areas for the period. As has been stated in prior reports there is no weather station maintained at any of these three refuges. The weather data is compiled and sent to this office every month from the weather station at Choteau, Teton County. Since the weather conditions are generally comparable on all three refuges it is believed this weather report is fairly accurate.

Month:	Precipitation:	Max. Temp.:	Min. Temp.:
January	.19	31	-30
February	.61	57	-17
March	.34	62	- 6
April	.17	63	5
Total	1.31	Extremes 63	-30

B. Water Conditions:

The following tables show the monthly gauge readings for Fishkun and Willow Creek as compared to the last five years.

FISHKUN

End of:	1932	1931	1930	1929	1928	1927
January	4365.4	4361.9	4362.0	4359.8	4363.3	4360.5
February	4365.2	4361.8	4361.8	4359.8	4363.5	4360.5
March	4365.0	4361.6	4361.7	4359.4	4363.3	4360.5
April	4365.3	4361.9	4362.1	4366.7	4363.3	4360.5
Crest of Spillway	4374.0					
				Bottom of Outlet	4342.0	

WILLOW CREEK

End of:	1932	1931	1930	1929	1928	1927
January	4135.4	4135.4	4136.9	4131.1	4129.7	4136.0
February	4136.0	4135.9	4138.7	4131.5	4130.0	4136.8
March	4137.1	4137.3	4110.9	4132.3	4130.4	4136.5
April	4138.1	4138.3	4115.9	4133.5	4132.3	4130.2
Crest of Spillway	4142.0					
				Bottom of Outlet	4085.0	

Benton Lake does not have a gauge station or a stable water

supply, however there is more water in Benton Lake at the present time than there has been in the old lake bed for a number of years. Runoff into this basin has been extra heavy this year and has flooded several hundred acres of the refuge. This flooding has created an excellent waterfowl habitat. It is easy to visualize from just this small amount of water what could be accomplished in the way of making a first class waterfowl refuge from this area.

II. WILDLIFE

A. Migratory Birds:

1. Populations and Behavior.

When these areas were visited late in April there were no geese on Fishkam and very few ducks (less than 50) on the main reservoir. All the potholes in the easement areas below the dam were covered and only approximately 150 ducks, mostly Mallards were observed.

There were approximately 20 Canada Geese and 150 ducks, mostly Mallards and Scaup, observed on the southwest side of Willow Creek, when this area was visited late in April. In one bay on the North side an estimated 300 Hired Grebe were observed along with approximately 100 Scaup and one pair of Gadwall.

During the inspection trip to Benton Lake late in April approximately 7500 ducks, mostly Mallards and Pintails, were observed to be using the flooded portion of the refuge. Baldpate, Gadwall, and Shovellers were also observed on the area.

Most of the birds observed on all three areas were paired, and from all indications there should be a successful nesting season. No Nests were observed on any of the three areas.

2. Food and Cover.

Food and cover conditions are poor on both Fishkam and Willow Creek with very little aquatic vegetation present on either area. Heavy grazing, fluctuating water levels, steep shore lines, and poor soil all combine to further this situation.

Heavy growth of upland native grasses and forbs provide excellent cover for both nesting and roosting waterfowl at Benton Lake. Extensive grain fields surrounding the refuge area provide an excellent source of food through the Fall and Winter months.

B. Upland Game Birds:

1. Populations and Behavior.

Sharptailed Grouse are present on all three areas in undetermined numbers. While at Willow Creek late in April the refuge manager observed two using the southwest corner of the refuge.

Thessants are common at Benton Lake and surrounding territory, however; none were observed at either Fishkam or Willow Creek.

B. Food and Cover.

Food and cover for Sharp-tailed Grouse is only fair at Fishman and Willow Creek, but excellent at Benton Lake. Very good conditions prevail at Benton Lake for Pheasants.

C. Big Game Animals:

No big game animals have been observed for several years on either Fishman or Willow Creek. At Benton Lake farmers report a small resident herd of Antelope. Conditions are excellent for these fleet-footed animals.

D. Fur Animals, Predators, and Rodents:

Whitetailed Jack Rabbits were observed on all three areas. They are slightly more abundant this year than formerly according to all the farmers near the refuges.

One Mink was observed by the refuge manager late in April at Willow Creek.

Richardson's ground squirrels are decreasing on all three areas and surrounding territories - thanks to the efforts of the predator and rodent control in this area.

E. Predaceous Birds, including Crows, Ravens, and Magpies:

Crows and Magpies were observed on all three areas, but in such few numbers as to constitute no serious problem now or in the near future.

F. Fish:

The presence of both Loon and Mergansers on Fishman and Willow Creek reservoirs indicate the presence of fish in these waters. Several reports of good catches of rainbow trout from Fishman have been received by the refuge manager.

III. REFUGE DEVELOPMENT MAINTENANCE

None during period.

IV. ECONOMIC USE OF THE REFUGE

None during the period at either Fishman or Willow Creek. Following is a list of permits issued during the period for Benton Lake:

Permittee:	FARMING PERMITS		
	Acreage Utilized	Period of Use	Rate
O.M. Olson	40	3-1-52/12-31-52	.50 acre

GRASSING PERMITS

Permittee:	Acreage Utilized	A.U.Ms.	Period of Use	Rate
Carl Hinderager	147	96	1-1-52/12-31-52	.20/acre
John Hinkle	1100	660	1-1-52/12-31-52	.20/acre
William Neuman	290	168	1-1-52/12-31-52	.20/acre
Charles Prinsing	290	168	1-1-52/12-31-52	.20/acre

V. APPLIED RESEARCH

During the fourth week in April the refuge manager and Game Management Agent J. D. Birch made an intensive study of Fisham and Willow Creek, including the easements, for nesting waterfowl. No nests were found, although all the birds noted were paired and appeared to be in the nesting mood.

Respectfully submitted:

Grover F. Egan

 Grover F. Egan
 Refuge Manager

Completed May 10, 1952

Approved: _____
 John E. Schwartz
 Supt. of Refuges

Approved: _____
 Regional Director
 Fish and Wildlife Service
 Region One, Portland, Ore.

Willow Creek Reservoir



Nesting area South West
side of Willow Creek Bog area.



Part of Pishkun Reservoir





Fishkun easement area.



A pair of Pintails
in canal near Fishkun



Benton Lake from East side
showing extensive shallow flooding



Benton Lake
from South East corner